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CHANUKAH SKETCH

BY
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NEW YORK
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY
"The Jewish Book Concern"
1921

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Characters

FATHER TIME.

A CHILD.

HANNAH, AND HER SEVEN SONS.

MATTATHIAS.

JUDAS MACCABEE.

Crowd of Israelites: Warriors, women, and children.

The costumes should be simple, flowing robes in Oriental colors for the women and children, with the usual swords, shields and helmets added for the warriors.

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SCENE: *A large room. A table stands at one side (left), at which sits old Father Time, writing in a large book. He has his hour glass and scythe at his side. Books and papers in great disorder cover the table. Two doors, right and left.*

(The Child enters at the right door, and goes left. He and Father Time remain seated at the table, while the characters are on and off the stage.)

FATHER TIME (*writes busily*): Dear me, dear me! Here it is almost New Year again, and I've not half my accounts written. I've gotten so confused with these discoveries of the North Pole and airships that it seems as though I'll never catch up with my days. Let me see. (*Writes hurriedly, consulting his calendar every few minutes.*)

(A knock is heard at the door.)

FATHER TIME (*testily, keeping on writing*): What is it? Don't come in, I'm busy.

(Door opens and Child enters, big-eyed with wonder, but perfectly at ease.)

FATHER TIME (*continues writing*): Well, what do you want?

(No answer.)

FATHER TIME (*pounds on the table*): Hurry up, I say!
Can't you see I'm busy?

(*Child jumps.*)

(*Father Time looks up for the first time and sees Child.*)

FATHER TIME (*kindly*): Oh, hello, I didn't mean to frighten you!

CHILD (*politely*): You didn't, sir. I'm a Jew, you know, and we never get scared.

FATHER TIME: Indeed! Well, and what do you want here, my little man?

CHILD (*advances to the table*): Please, sir, are you Father Time?

FATHER TIME: That's what the earth people call me.

CHILD: Then I want you to show me where all the stories come from.

FATHER TIME (*astonished*): What!

CHILD (*repeats*): I want you to tell me a story. When Mother put me to bed tonight she said that Father Time kept all the stories locked up in his books. So I thought I'd come and see for myself. Is this one?
(*He reaches out for the book nearest him, and tries to open it.*)

FATHER TIME: Hold on, hold on there, my young man. That book is not to be opened by anyone but me.

CHILD: Oh, excuse me. But why can't I do it?

FATHER TIME: Because that's the Book of the Future, and no man may look into that. But there, there (*he glances at his hour-glass*). I've a few minutes to spare now, and I'll show you some of the pictures in this other book. Come!

(*Child climbs on his knee. Father Time unclasps a large volume bound in dark colors.*)

CHILD: What is this one called?

FATHER TIME: The Book of the Past.

CHILD: Did you write it?

FATHER TIME: Yes, my boy.

CHILD (*peers in as Father Time turns the pages absent-mindedly*): How funny it looks! And what queer kind of ink you have used—it is so faint.

FATHER TIME: Ah, my dear, that is memory. But now, we must hurry to our story. What kind do you want?

CHILD (*eagerly*): Oh, fairy stories, please!

FATHER TIME: You won't find them in here or at least men don't give them that name. (*He ponders a moment.*) But wait, I've an idea! Can you tell me what holiday is coming next?

CHILD (*proudly*): Chanukah, sir.

FATHER TIME (*nodding assent*): That's right. So now, I am going to introduce you to some of the people who made that festival for you and let them tell their own story.

(Father Time turns back page after page, stopping at the one he wants, and bids the Child look down at it. Instantly, the light of the stage grows dimmer, and figures advance from the shadows at the back of the stage. The light brightens again, and shows Hannah surrounded by her seven sons.)

HANNAH (*looks down at them lovingly, and fondles the youngest*): Oh, my sons, my own fine boys, do you know how dear you are to your mother Hannah?

FIRST BOY: Yes, Mother, but you have taught us something better than that.

SECOND BOY: Aye, to love and serve the God of Israel, blessed be He!

SEVENTH AND SMALLEST BOY: Oh, Mother, do you think I'll ever get the chance to keep my promise? I am ready to die.

HANNAH (*takes him in her arms impulsively*): Hush, child, hush! You know not whereof you speak!

THIRD BOY (*interrupts*): Oh, no Mother. He does know what it means to worship the God of Israel, when all our enemies try to make us sacrifice to their strange gods.

FOURTH BOY: Aye, were we not stoned in the street yesterday, as we hurried home from the Temple!

FIFTH BOY (*timidly*): Mother, think you harm can come of it all?

HANNAH (*looks frightened, and tries to gather them all into her arms. Then she assumes a brave air and says*): No fear, no one need fear, as long as he remains true to his trust. Come, my sons; once more let us pledge ourselves to the worship of the Most High—blessed be He!

(*They all stand in a circle and raise their hands, chanting.*)

We swear to be true to the God of our Fathers,
To the truth that Jehovah to Israel has shown;
We sing loud His praise, with our voices we raise—
(*Sounds of tumult outside interrupt.*)

SIXTH BOY: Mother, Mother, the time has come!

(*He runs out of the room, the others following him.*)

HANNAH (*hurries after them sobbing frantically*): My children, my sons, my children! Come back, come back!

(*Pause of a few moments.*)

CHILD (*gazing up at Father Time, piteously*): And were they all killed?

FATHER TIME: Yes, yes, my dear. But look here, (*points to the next page*) here is a happier story.

(*Stage darkens again. Music plays a triumphal march. The stage brightens, showing Judas Maccabee in warrior costume. He stands in the center of the stage, with his helmet off, paying reverence to his father who is dressed in the garments of a High Priest. Warriors, women and children stand around.*)

JUDAS MACCABEE: Give my thy blessing, my father!

MATTATHIAS: You have conquered the enemy, slain the foe.

The great and the mighty your arm has laid low.

JUDAS MACCABEE: In the name of the Lord, I triumphed over them.

MATTATHIAS: The Assyrian's army all lie in the dust,
Forever and ever their heavy swords rust.

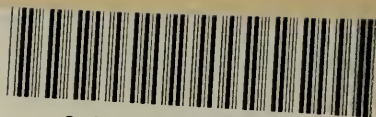
JUDAS MACCABEE: The Almighty, blessed be He, hath cast out his foe!

MATTATHIAS: Israel's freedom through you is rewon,
Jehovah's best blessing be on you, my son!

CHORUS (*all chant*): Hail to the conqueror,
Hail to the Maccabee:
He who has saved Israel,
He who has destroyed the enemy,
He who will lead Israel among the
nations;
Hail, all hail!

(*They form a procession and file out of the room, Judas Maccabee and Mattathias leading.*)
(*Pause.*)

CHILD: Oh, that was fine! Show me some more, please.



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(He tries to hide his yawns, but begins to look very tired.)

FATHER TIME: Aha, I think I had better look at my hour glass! Somebody is sleepy; it is high time that he should be in bed!

CHILD *(rubbing his eyes)*: I'm not tired, honest I'm not!
(Yawns again.)

FATHER TIME *(laughs good-naturedly)*: Well, I am. So good-night.

(Child begins to slip down from Father Time's knees and as he does so the room darkens again.)

CHILD *(sleepily)*: Good-night! Thank you, Father Time.

(Chorus outside sings the traditional Chanukah Hymn while curtain falls.)

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